Thomas Beard, The Pioneer and Founder of Beardstown, Illinois.

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Reprinted from the Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society 1917.

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ILLINOIS STATE JOURNAL CO., STATE PRINTERS.
SPRINGFIELD, ILL.
1918

5002—50

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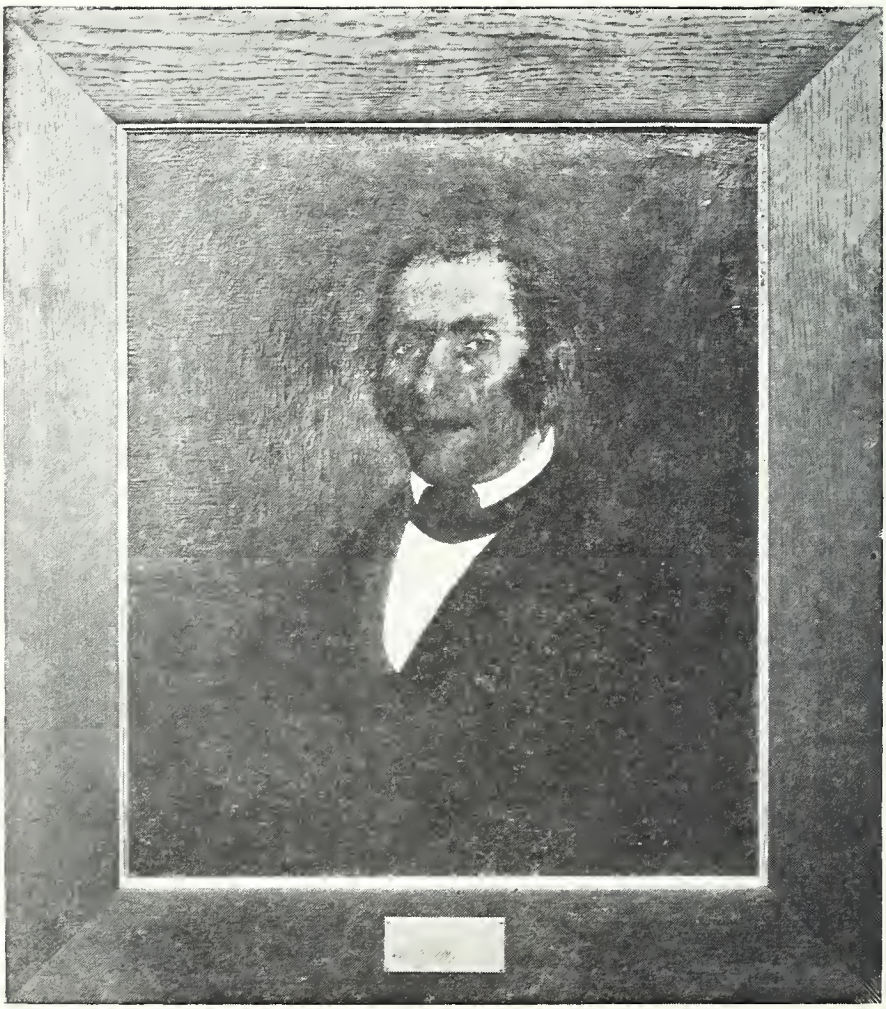


THOMAS BEARD.

From an oil painting presented to Beardstown by his daughter, Mrs. Stella Beard Poe.

THOMAS BEARD, THE PIONEER AND FOUNDER OF BEARDSTOWN, ILLINOIS

By Rev. P. C. Croll, D. D.

It is an honor and a privilege to participate in the holding of this Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the Illinois State Historical Society, because itself has such an emphatic, historical setting. It meets but a month after our great nation has become actively involved in the great world war, which has already distressed, if not laid waste most of the nations of Europe. Within the bounds of this city are now established two camps and training schools, one for the training of our soldiery and the other for the schooling of an army of Red Cross nurses, for the equipment of a mighty force in the participation of the great struggle for world-freedom and democracy. It is but four days since, as a consequence of this world's struggle, there visited this city the distinguished representatives of France, and here, in the Hall of our State Legislature and at the tomb of the great Lincoln, with the city gaily decorated with the flags of two nations, paid a fitting tribute to this State and Nation, and made touching appeal to the great commonwealth to come to the help of the gigantic struggle, now going on on French soil and elsewhere, against militaristic autocracy. Again, it is but a week since in this city for the first time in its history, (and let us hope forever), the notorious John Barleycorn, as a *persona non grata* to the majority of its citizens, was compelled to bow his exit from within its bounds. Once more, it meets just as the first century of the State's life, as the 21st member in the federal union, is running to its close and while prep-

arations are going on for the proper celebration next year, of the first centennial of Illinois as a separate state.

While these preparations are going on for the fitting observance of Illinois' centennial, it has been thought proper to direct attention to the history of local communities, as a sort of prelude to next year's more elaborate historical pageant, for it will be found that the State's history can only be spelled out by the sum of the life and development of the separate local communities. Like every thing else, the whole is but the sum of all its parts. Hence the writer will attempt in this paper to tell in brief the story of Beardstown and Thomas Beard, its pioneer founder.

This city of Beardstown will itself celebrate the centennial of its founder's first setting foot upon its sandy soil only one year after our state shall have celebrated its enrollment among the great union of states, over which proudly floats out national emblem with its now forty-eight stars.

But first let me give a paragraph to show the true historical setting, at that time, when our State, and this municipality came into being, as to world's life. As intimated above, out state was just one year old when Thomas Beard first came to the Mounds Village of the Muscooten Indians, which then occupied the site of the present proud municipal queen of Cass County. The white settlers, in the limits of the county, then could have been numbered with the fingers of one hand. As the great territory's settlement had scarcely begun, out of which was carved this twenty-first state of the union, none of the internal improvements, which now give Illinois such a conspicuous place in the sisterhood of states, had yet come. There was then no foot of railroad built, or canal dug, in the entire state, which now boasts of being the greatest railroad state in the union. There were then scarcely any highways in all the state. 'Tis true, there was a narrow rim of settlements along the southwestern border of the state, with Kaskaskia, the State's first capital, as its center. And there

was a system of bridle paths and mud roads—made famous in the writings of Charles Dickens, who visited this State in an early day*—which connected these first settlements. In-coming settlers, as far as these came overland, made new paths through the rich glebe, for their prairie schooners, while in the southern section road-marking and road-building was being discussed and effected between the French settlements of Old Vincennes, on the Wabash, and St. Louis on the Mississippi. But the central and northern sections of the State still lay in their unbroken, virgin, prairie condition. There was a map of the State giving its general outlines, but Chicago, Rockford, Dixon, Rock Island, Ottawa, Streator, Joliet, Bloomington, Peoria, Galesburg, Carthage, Quincy, Macomb, Havana, Springfield, Decatur, Champaign, Danville, Paris, Charleston, Pana, Hillsboro, Vandalia, Alton, and Beardstown, together with the scores of flourishing towns lying between, were then not on the map For a decade or more after this, the first settler had not yet come, either to the State's gigantic metropolis Chicago, or its present progressive capital city, in which we are now assembled. Beardstown came into being before any of the above named centers of life and activity. She was among the first of the State's town-children to be born, and was a flourishing trading post, known far and wide, as a meat-packing center and emporium, while Chicago still lay in its infantile swaddling clothes, and while Omaha and Kansas City and Denver and Portland and Seattle were still undreamed of nonentities. Even New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore were then comparative small cities, while the whole nation had less than nine millions of population. We had just fought our second war with Great Britain, and Europe had newly come to rest from that nineteenth century dreamer of world empire, Napoleon Bonaparte. The first steamship had not yet crossed the Atlantic, nor had ever yet the streets of any American city been lit by gas nor a

* Charles Dickens visited Illinois in 1842.

telegraphic message been sent in all the world. As for telephones, cables, or wireless messages, bicycles or automobiles, aeroplanes or submarines, they were not dreamed of for another half century. Negro slavery still flourished in the southern half of our country and continued for forty years longer. The great emancipator, who gave to this State her greatest fame as one of her adopted sons, was just ten years old, and had not yet set foot upon her prairie soil. The Indians still occupied two-thirds of our immense domain. Lo! what a century of exploration, invention, settlement, conquest, development and making of political history lies immediately behind us! Illinois' one hundred years of life has seen the working of the mightiest wonders of progress in every line of modern-day advancement that this world has ever known. Physically it has been the wonder-working century of all time.

It was at the beginning of this marvelous century, just past, that Thomas Beard, a youth of twenty-three or twenty- four years of age, of eastern birth, first stepped upon the state's still uncultivated soil. But the then awakening empire of the middle west stirred his blood and lured him forth with the restless and insatiable *wanderlust* of the explorer. We shall see to what it led him.

Thomas Beard was a man of good, sturdy, New England stock. In his forbears and his own personal experience he contains and covers the best advancing trend of our nation's progressive history. Through his ancestors he is connected with the best blend of blood and progress that marked the centuries of settlement, historic development and political independence that had its beginnings in New England and the Atlantic seaboard.

In the Revolutionary war roster of sailors from Massachusetts appears the name of Amos Beard, who served for seven years in that severe struggle for freedom "that tried men's souls," He was the grandfather of the subject of this sketch. Before he enlisted in the sanguinary struggle for liberty and independence, he had married Hannah

Needham, descendant of another worthy New Englander, and of this union was born in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, on September 24, 1764, their first son, Jedediah. Six other brothers and sisters came to gladden and fill up this new home before the fires of revolution were kindled, when the patriotism of the father, that burned like a hidden flame, broke forth to make him, with others, go forth, with trusty flintlock and a stout heart to

> Strike till the last armed foe expires
> Strike for their altars and their fires;
> Strike for the green graves of their sires,
> God and their native land.

This Jedidiah, from twelve to nineteen years of age, assisted the mother in the care of the home, while the father was fighting for his country's deliverance from the oppression of Great Britain. He became later the father of Thomas Beard, the western pioneer. "Near the close of the long military struggle the anxious and care-worn mother died and the patriot husband and father returned to his desolate home and to his motherless children. To better his condition he removed his family to Granville, Washington County, New York, where certain of the relatives were then living."

On September 1, 1793 at Granville, Jedediah Beard married Charlotte Nichols, daughter of John Nichols, who was born in Vermont. Of this union was born at Granville, on December 4, 1794, their first child, Thomas Beard, the subject of this sketch. An uncle, Amaziah Beard had in 1798 removed from Granville to the "Western Reserve" of Ohio. He sent back repeated and glowing reports of the prosperity and advantages of this new country, so that Jedediah soon felt the urging of the western wanderlust, and as soon as he could overcome his wife's reluctance, which was in 1800, they, with certain other neighbors, took up the trail and trekked to the wilds of Ohio and settled near the southern shores of Lake Erie. Thomas

was but six years old at the time of this flitting, but if an impressionable child at all, he was old and observant enough to sow the seeds of adventure, which developed in his brain about fifteen years thereafter, when of his own accord he plunged into a newer and larger and more distant country to explore and settle and develop.and write his own name upon the yet unwritten tablets of history, in the then new-born State of Illinois.

The hardships endured in his family's removal from New York to Ohio have been related, but they were a valuable asset for the boy, who should brave greater hardships and plan greater exploits as a young man. Finally, however, the difficulties of that primitive journey on horseback in mere bridle paths came to an end after four months, when the boy's uncle, Amaziah, came out to meet them with an ox team from his settlement at the present site of Barton, on the west bank of the Cuyahoga River, where they also took up their new residence on May 4, 1800. From a biographical sketch by Hon. J. N. Gridley, we learn that Jedediah Beard purchased a lot in the new town, having previously bought a mill property on the west bank of the river. In a double log cabin, erected on this lot, the Beards took up their residence and reared their family among forests, and amid wild animals and Indians. What a school for coming adventurer and pioneer! Some prosperity came to the household and the children were educated to the best of their ability in their own home and later in a private school taught by a teacher named Robinson, in Conneaut, Ohio. The following letter written by Thomas Beard to his father, came to my hands through his niece Mrs Mary G. Fisher a nonegenarian of Petersburg, Illinois, showing the young Beard away at school at Salem Ohio in 1814.

Salem, January 2, 1814.

Dear Father:—

We have this morning received news from Buffalo of its being burnt. The express arrived here last night at

midnight, and says the enemy crossed over last Friday morning at Black Rock, and the regulars and militia to the amount of 2000 attacked them, but not being able to stand this enemy, they retreated to Buffalo, where they were surrounded and taken prisoners. He says the enemy had proceeded towards Erie about ten miles, and were marching on as fast as possible with intention to burn the vessels that lie in the basin at that place. We have heard that there was 3000 of the enemy that crossed over. As to our school we have had a very good chance so far. I have got as far as rebate, and Thalia is now on compound interest. Our bill is likely to be very high, as provision is hard to be got at any price. Wheat costs 12 shillings per bushel. If you could buy it at a reasonable price you could sell it here at a dollar and a half a bushel. Mr. Robinson wants to have you bring down two or three cheeses for him when you come. We are very well contented with our situation there and at the school. Thalia hopes to see you here this month. I hope you will write us soon as you receive this. We have scarcely heard from home since we have been here. Curtis must write a letter at least a rod long, and let us have some news. I think I have wrote my part.

(To Jedediah Beard.) (Signed) Thomas Beard.

Under this instructor Thomas made rapid progress in his studies. In later years he attended an academy, where he studied history, mathematics, surveying and other branches of learning.

Like his grandfather, so his father had a strong patriotic nature and needed but the proper occasion to kindle it into a burning flame. Accordingly at the outbreak of the war of 1812 Jedediah Beard became a soldier. He was chosen Lieutenant Colonel of the 1st Regiment of 4th Brigade of 4th Division of Ohio State Militia, and in March, 1813, took command of his regiment and reported at Cleveland, Ohio. He, like his father in the Revolutionary struggle, left wife and a large family (nine children in all) to struggle

in their domestic conflict, while he battled the enemy at the front. Thomas, a youth of 18 years, shouldered the responsibility of his father in this domestic struggle. But it was not for so long a term, for immediately after Perry's victory on Lake Erie, in September 1813, the father returned to his family.

Thomas soon thereafter, reached his majority and with this period of his development, was manifested his desire of adventure and exploration. The opening west lured him. He had dreamed of the pioneer experience, of discovery and a home amid the newer and wilder scenes of the now opening Mississippi Valley. Though his mother was loath to see him leave home and made long protest, the ambitions and perservance of the son finally prevailed. In 1817 he left home. His first letter from Wooster, Ohio, dated December 13 of that year states his intention to start for the south on Monday next. The next letter was sent from St. Louis, from which city he proceeded to Edwardsville, Illinois. Here he must have remained some time. It is known he had a grave spell of sickness while residing here with a family named Dunsmore. In 1819 he leaves Edwardsville, in company with Gen. Murray McConnel (whose later years were spent in Jacksonville, Ill.) to make an overland trip on horse-back to the Illinois River, having been previously explored to some extent by his travel mate. Their destination was the Kickapoo Mounds just below the mouth of the Sangamon. At this place was then located an Indian village, or settlement, of the Muscooten tribe. They had given the name to the large local bay located here, from which for many decades since the finest ice is harvested and shipped every winter and quantities of the best fish are caught and shipped every summer. The prospect pleased Mr. Beard and he decided to remain, while Gen. McConnel returned. And his remaining and becoming the first white settler at this point fixes the date of Beardstown's beginning. His hut was the westermost outpost of civilization at this point and his

first operations the stake setting and beginning of the future Beardstown, though the town site may not have been plotted for nearly a decade later. Little did his protesting mother dream on his leaving taking from home, that she and her husband and many others of her family should ever be lured after him, and, like Joseph of old, he be found in this land of corn to give them a welcome in their old age and a happy home and a peaceful sepulture here in this prairie soil. The following description of a journey made by a sister and brother-in-law of Beards and their family is descriptive of Mr. Beard's life there, and the journeyings and settlements of Illinois' early pioneers:

The first relatives that came west was Edward Collins and his family, which consisted of his wife, one daughter 16 years of age, myself and a boy 5 years old, and baby 1 year, also a daughter of Mr. Beard. In an old letter we find, they left Barton, Ohio, on Nov. 16, 1836, drove to Wellsville, arriving there on the 19th, we then went aboard the steamer Tremont, reached Louisville the 23d. We transferred to the Girard, a better boat for St. Louis. On the 30th, we left St. Louis on the Wyoming for Beardstown, the only boat that could run when there was ice in the river. My brother-in-law told me afterward there were but two boats built for that purpose, and they were not a success. We arrived in Beardstown on the 1st of December, 1836, after a perilous trip from St. Louis which took two days.

Incidents I remember of the journey in those days. The cabins were small, and not built for passengers. The deck was one large room, and each family was allowed a space for themselves and baggage, extra pay for the same. We had the center, and the spaces were partitoned off. The room for the deck hands was enclosed; there were little benches all around the room. We had boxes of provisions and clean straw beds. One nice family on the side of the boat who had a stove and kindly let us use it when we needed it.

While on the Girard our boat run a race and won. The children enjoyed it but mother did not.

On the Wyoming, wheels were large buckets to help propel the boat, and I used to enjoy watching them. The buckets would dip up the water and when they came to the top of the wheel would turn over and empty the water. One bucket was broken.

The ice came thicker and faster, an unusual break up at that time, but we moved slowly along.

The deck hands stood on the bow of the boat with long poles with sharp spikes in the end and when a large cake of ice came they would push it one side of the boat.

They had barrels of tar near the fire where they could dip the wood in when it was necessary to do so.

When the night came, they lighted up the boat and the large cakes of ice would strike the boat, and every timber would shiver and shake. Loud voices were heard and great excitement prevailed. I was close in my mother's arms and she would say, another blow like that and we are gone, but we survived the night.

They stopped frequently for wood. Toward night my brother Chas., 5 years old, thought his father went ashore and tried to follow him. The plant was icy and he slipped and would have gone into the river. A man caught him and Blessed Providence saved him.

Uncle Beard lived on the opposite side of the river from the town, keeping the ferry. He knew we were on the way, but no telephone to inform him of our whereabouts, and he was anxiously waiting for us. He finally decided to go to St. Louis with teams the next morning and meet us, but we arrived that night before he started.

He heard the boom, boom of the boat down the river, and had all hands out with the flat boat and went over the icy river and met the steamer and we were transferred to the flat boat.

We reached the Schuyler side as a large cake of ice was coming down. We made our way to the large two story

white house all lighted up to welcome us, and a lovely supper awaiting us. Hot biscuits and honey and other good things with uncle Beard smiling awaiting us on Dec. 1, 1836.

Thomas Beard seems to have had no difficulty in becoming acquainted, and a favorite among the red men. He began the life of a trader among them and continued it for a number of years. There were checkered experiences for these years. But Thomas Beard, the squatter, managed to get into his possession some of the land on the river front where their mounds were located, to which he afterwards acquired legal title when the new state disposed of them (begun in 1823). In 1826 his first land entry was made and the real beginning of town building began. Gradually new settlements came into these parts, which in a few years grew more rapidly. A westward trail led through these parts which grew into a busy emigration highway for the country west of the Illinois. The peninsula formed by the Illinois and Mississippi rivers was parcelled out by the national Government as bounty land to the soldiers of our second war with England, and has ever since been known as "the Military Tract". There was a rush for it, and the states beyond the Mississippi, viz: Missouri and Iowa. This made it profitable to establish a ferry at this point, which favorable opportunity Thomas Beard embraced in the year 1826. Soon hotel quarters were needed on either side of the stream and Mr. Beard, having meanwhile laid out his land in a town plot, erected his hostelry at the corner of State and Main Streets, which was known to past generations as "The City Hotel", and which was only displaced in 1915 to make room for the new Federal Building, which now adorns this corner. The opposite side of the river also had hotel accommodations in charge of different men, but was in the hands of Thomas E. Collins, (a nephew of Beard, and born in Barton, Ohio), on the occurrence of the remarkable and sudden change in temtemperature, known in local history as "the Cold Day of

Illinois," (which occurred on December 20, 1836), and which he described, when many men out traveling and many heads of cattle were frozen to death in different parts of Illinois by an almost instantaneous drop of a mild temperature to many degrees below zero.

The first accounts of Beard's doings here given by himself and preserved, are from letters to his parents. But they are after he had purchased the land from the State and laid out his town plot, thus:

"Sangamon Bay, March 20, 1826, I have settled on the East bank of the Illinois River, on public land, 120 miles above St. Louis. My reason for choosing this location is on account of its being a valuable site for a town and a ferry. The country is settling fast."

A few other historical data may be quoted here as taken from J. Henry Shaw's address on Cass County's History, delivered on July 4, 1876. They are as follows:

"The principal Indian tribes of the Illinois were the Muscootens, and their town was upon the present site of Beardstown, on the east bank of the river, at the foot of Muscooten Bay, and was called by the French 'the Mound Village'.

"The Peorians, another of the Illinois tribes, more particularly occupied that portion of the country between the rivers (Illinois and Mississippi), having their town on the west bank of the Illinois River, four miles above the Muscooten village, upon the bluffs back of the present town of Frederick. The present site of Beardstown was at that time an island, surrounded on the northeast and south by almost impassable swamps, containing dangerous quicksands and quaking bogs and which could be crossed only in canoes or by Indians jumping from hillock to hillock of the turf grass with which these swamps were interspersed, and on the west by the Seignelay (French name) or Illinois River. The Indian town of the Muscootens was a beautiful place. It was built upon a series of beautiful mounds, covered with grass, and partially

shaded by tall trees, which stood like sentinels upon the hills, or ornamental trees upon a lawn, so scattered as to obstruct the view of the whole town from the river. The island had evidently been selected, not on account of its natural beauty, but for its easy defense and safety from enemies.

"Back of the swamp which protected the rear of the town, was a wide belt of rich prairie bottom land, and beyond six miles, loomed up the Sangamon Bluffs, looking like miniature Andes in the distance, between which and the island, in the day time, all approaching foes could be discerned."

Here follows the description of a great battle fought at Muscooten Bay, between the Iroquois and Miamis on one side and Illini (Peorias and Muscootens) on the other. The Miamis encamped upon the present site of Chandlerville and there buried their dead in bluffs nearby, whose skeletons were seen exposed by wind and rain long after the town's settlement, while the Muscootens dispersed. Years later this island was taken possession of by the Kickapoo Indians, upon which they built their village, known as "Kickapoo Town" and remembered by the French missionaries as "Beautiful Mound Village."

"This became a favorite trading post and missionary station and continued in the possession of the Kickapoos until its settlement by Thomas Beard in 1820, after whom the present city of Beardstown was named.

"Forty years ago the great mound in Beardstown began to be encroached upon by the spade and the pick axe of the avaricious white man. The decaying bones of the red warriors as they lay in their quiet and lonely resting place, with the implements of war around them; the silver and flint crosses of the missionaries; even the beautiful mound itself, which as an ornament to the river and a historic feature of the town, should have been held sacred, could not restrain the money-making white man from destroying it, and it is now recollected only by the old settlers, who

used to sit upon its summit and watch the passing away of the last two races—the Indian in his canoe and the French voyager in his pirogue.

"In 1700, Illinois was a part of the territory owned by the French Government and was called New France.

"In 1720 all the country west of the Mississippi River belonged to Spain, with Santa Fe as its capital.

"In 1763 Illinois was ceded by France to Great Britain after a 'seven years' war'. Many French inhabitants, rather than live under British rule, joined Laclede and settled St. Louis.

"In 1778 the Illinois country was conquered from Great Britain by troops from the state of Virginia under the command of General George Rogers Clark, which was an independent military enterprise of the state; and on the 4th of July of that year, General Clark and his troops took possession of Kaskaskia, the capital of the British possessions west of the Alleghenies, and declared the Illinois country free and independent of Great Britain, thus making the 4th day of July the natal day of this State as well as of our nation.

"In that year Illinois was created a county of Virginia, and Thimeté DeMombreun was appointed by the Governor, Patrick Henry, a justice of the peace, to rule over it, which was possibly the most extensive territorial jurisdiction that a magistrate ever had.

"In 1794 the Legislature of the Northwest Territory divided it into two counties, Randolph and St. Clair.

"In 1809 Illinois was a separate territory.

"In 1812 Madison County was organized from St. Clair and then contained all of the present state north of St. Clair and Randolph.

"In 1818 Illinois was admitted into the Union as the twenty-first state.

"In 1821 Greene County was formed from Madison county. In 1823 Morgan County was formed from Greene and in 1837 Cass County was formed from Morgan County."

"Immigration was retarded by frequent earthquakes in Illinois. Between 1811-13 they were as severe as any ever on the continent. New Madrid, a flourishing town near the mouth of the Ohio River was utterly destroyed and swallowed up. In 1825 the Erie Canal was completed and steamboats had been introduced upon the Mississippi and its tributaries, while immigration received a new impulse and flowed vigorously. In the East it was called "the Western Fever", and it carried many off West.

"In 1818 a man by the name of Pulliam settled upon Horse Creek, a tributary of the Sangamon, and later in November of that year, another man by the name of Seymour Kellogg, was the first settler in the country comprised afterward in the county of Morgan, and it was at his house that the first white child of the Sangamon country was born."

This gives us the settling of this section and county at the time Thomas Beard arrived. He was the first actual white settler within the limits of Beardstown, coming in 1819, as we have learned and remaining to make it his permanent future home. In 1820 Martin L. Lindsey and family. Timothy Harris and John Cettrough settled in Camp Hollow, a short distance east of the present county farm, where Mr. Lindsey built a cabin in which the first white child in this immediate vicinity was born. (Are any of these descendants still with us? May our present mayor have come from this stock of Harrises. Then he should be re-elected as the offspring of earliest pioneers and honored to preside at our city's centennial celebration.)

In 1820 the first family, after Beard, settled on the site of Beardstown. Their name was Eggleston. In 1819 the late mayor Elijah Iles, of Springfield, landed here and passed on to the "Kelley Settlement," afterwards called Calhoun, and now Springfield, the State capital. He spoke of a hut at Beardstown built of birchen poles, standing on the bank of the river. Was it Beard's temporary quarters or that of earlier French traders or missionaries?

Archibald Job, later a prominent character in the

county, took up temporary residence on Beardstown's site in 1821. That year there were but twenty families in all the limits of the present Cass, Morgan and Scott Counties.

Where Beard found his first wife the present writer does not know, but that he was married to Sarah Bell in 1826 is recorded. Their oldest child, a daughter, was born here on July 1, 1827. We know also that they had two more children, when in 1834 they were legally divorced.

We come now to the records of land entries made by this pioneer. These are found in the Recorder's office of Morgan County.

The first land entry was made by Thomas Beard and Enoch C. March, jointly on September 23, 1826. It was the n. e. quarter, S. 15, T. 18, R. 12 and upon this quarter Mr. Beard's first cabin had been built. On the 28th day of October, 1827, they entered the northwest quarter of this section, which extended to the river front below the big mound. Beard individually had entered the west half, southwest, on October 10, of same year, and John Knight entered the East Half, Southwest on July 17, 1828. These three men entered the entire section upon which the original town was located, in the years 1826, 1827, 1828. This original plot was laid out into town blocks, 23 in all, fronting on the river three blocks deep, reaching from Clay to Jackson Streets, of which block 10, lying between the Park and Main street, is the center one. It was the work of Beard and March, but the town was named for Beard. Francis Arenz (afterwards the closest and most confidential friend of Beard's) and Nathaniel Ware were among the first purchasers of property, and became joint land proprietors with Beard and March. An early deed was made to "Charles Robinson of New Orleans" in 1828 for the consideration of $100. The plot was about twelve acres. He agreed to place upon it within a year a steam mill, distillery, rope walk or store, or in default, return the deed for the consideration given. This Charles Robinson lived until late in the seventies near Arenzville.

The first minister who settled at Beardstown, about 1823, and entered eighty acres nearby was Reddick Horn, a Methodist. Previous to 1830, the time of the deep snow, about 200 families had settled in the valley between Chandlerville and Arenzville. The event of the "big snow" became an easy incident to reckon from in point of personal memory, as also the "cold day" in 1836 and the "big flood" in 1844.

With the incoming rush of settlers and travel Beard's three-fold business increased, viz. his ferry, his hostelry and his sale of town lots.

Thus we learn that on May 10, 1836, he and Francis Arenz, acting for Ware, laid off an addition of thirty-six blocks, and called it "Beard's and Ware's addition" to Beardstown. Ware then sold all his interests to Arenz, and these two, Beard and Arenz, then on July 1, 1837, laid off another twenty-one blocks which they called "Beard's and Arenz's addition.

From a letter to his father, written on February 23, 1830, we learn how Beard was flourishing at that time. The letter follows:

BEARDSTOWN, MORGAN COUNTY, ILLINOIS,
February 23, 1830.

I am still keeping ferry and public house. A part of my land I laid out in town lots, which the people have given me the honor of calling by my name. The place is improving. There are now three stores, and a very extensive steam mill, capable of manufacturing from 50 to 75 barrels per day. Also a saw mill and a distillery attached. I am now engaged in building a two story and a half brick house, 33 by 43. This building prevented my coming home last fall as I intended. My iron constitution still holds good, though exposed to every hardship."

The building alluded to in this letter was the one already referred to as the "City Hotel" of Beard, which stood, somewhat improved by Henry T. Foster in later

years until 1915, when it was removed to give place to the new Post Office building. It was thus an ancient and historic landmark of eighty-five years, when it gave way to the march of greater progress in Beard's old town. But what changes it saw! What traffic on the river upon whose bank it stood a mute witness! What a stream of travel and westward migration overland it saw course in and out its hospitable doors! What a lively city it saw growing up about it! What slaughter and meat-packing houses it saw rise and fall! How the grist, saw and gin mills, as earliest businesses, grew apace within its life—the flour mill of Schultz, Baujan & Co., alone now sending out 1500 barrels daily, the saw mill of A. E. Schmoldt, until recently doing a gigantic business and the liquor business now increased, alas! to twenty odd retail establishments! How the young state has since developed into the third state of the Union in population and wealth! How it saw the birth of Chicago, the same to grow into the metropolis of the State and the second city in size in the United States.

Mr. Beard was enterprising, honest and upright, diligent and farseeing, public spirited and benevolent and thus he was respected and prospered.

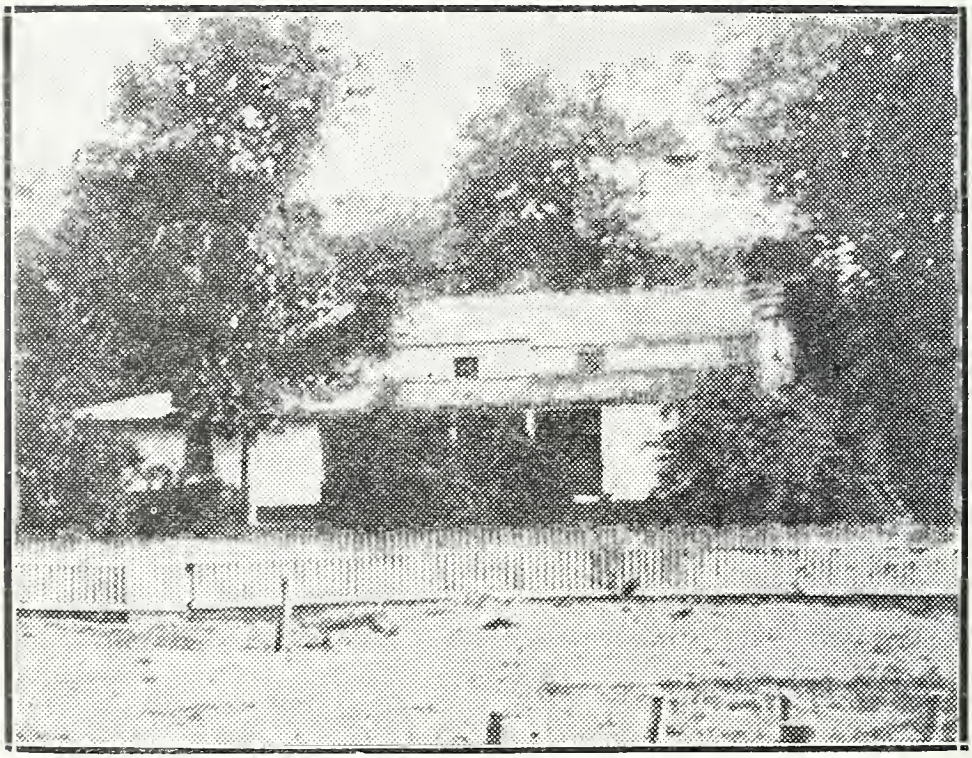
Among the beneficient deeds of his life was the building of the first school house in 1834 (the one recently torn down on Sixth Street, near State, to make room for Floyd M. Condit's home) which he and Francis Arenz built jointly and presented to the town. Well, therefore, that our present school board honored this founder and public benefactor with the naming of the latest, the finest, and the most modern school building of the city for this generous pioneer. Mr. Beard also presented the town with its Central Park, made historic by many public meetings, musicals, band concerts, political mass meetings, with such orators as Lincoln and Douglas speaking in it, and with the holding in it for a score and a half of years of the popular "Beardstown Annual Free Fish Frys". Shame that it should have been desecrated by a lynching act. Its present con-

BEARD SCHOOL BUILDING.

Beardstown Illinois.

But the murder trial of Duff Armstrong takes precedence of all other interesting incidents connected with this Hall. The story of it is well and minutely told in an article by Hon. J. N. Gridley of Virginia, and published in the Illinois State Historical Society's Journal of April, 1910. It would be interesting to quote at length from the article here, but we refer the interested reader to the article itself and turn to another and the last of Beard's historic landmarks. This was his summer home in the bluffs, and has just given way to Time's devouring tooth, as it was razed this very Spring.

In 1836 Thomas Beard, having found fortune smiled upon him, bought 560 acres of land at the bluffs to the northeast of town, where this skirting rim of land elevation forms an obtuse angle of about 240 degrees in the frame it builds of the eastern and southern sides for the Illinois and Sangamon River valleys. It is six miles from town and located just east of the Brick School House (which, by the way, was built by Beard), where the bluffs shove out this elbow. The property is now the possession of Mrs. Ella Seaman, widow of the late Fred Seaman. Here Mr. Beard reared his summer home, located on the first terrace of bluff land in the shape of a commodious bungalow of oak and walnut. He surrounded the same with choice orchards and vineyards and opened the house to hospitality, sociability and domestic bliss. Many were the occasions when these three sisters like sweet graces, presided here, and many are the memories of our few surviving octagenarians of social functions enjoyed here: and many the stories told of the choice and luscious fruits grown in these hillside orchards. Few of the fruit trees survive and hardly any of the choice grapes that once grew here. There are two or three chestnut trees in the rear of the house—very rare arborial specimens for Illinois—which Mr. Zuar E. Maine, a relative and townsman, recently told the writer his father had brought as nuts from the northern part of Ohio, when in 1837 he moved here at the solicitation of Mr. Beard, and



BEARD HOMESTEAD.

planted them upon the latter's land. They bear nuts each year and thus form a sort of living link between two or three generations—an annual dividend of kindly care and thoughtfulness for posterity. It chances that Mr. Beard soon succeeded in drawing to his new settlement a large portion of his eastern relatives, for in close proximity to his homestead the land was bought up by four or five brothers-in-law. Mr. Collins' and Mr. Loomis' farms adjoined his on the south, towards Bluff Springs, and Mr. Beales settled in the Sangamon Bottoms (present farm of Charles Bluhm), while Mr. Maine built his home on a two-acre patch on the Chandlerville road next to the Brick School. Two other brothers-in-law were Mr. Bohme and a Mr. Canfield, who also settled nearby. All of these lived and died here and are buried in the Beard Cemetery. So were his aged parents induced to follow their prosperous son and spend the declining days near him. They also are buried in the Beard Cemetery.

I will let a nephew of Mr. Beard's describe the first general Illinois Thanksgiving feast celebrated in the Bearn homestead. The writer alluded to was the late Prof. John Loomis, A. M., well known by many now living in this city, in Virginia and various other places in Cass County, and whose nephew, Henry Loomis, and niece, Mrs. Charles Goodell, still reside at Chandlerville, Illinois. Thus he described this first Thanksgiving feast. We quote from Historical Sketches, by J. N. Gridley:

*"In November, 1845, by the recommendation of the executive of this State, the first day of public Thanksgiving was observed—a venerable custom in New England, but of recent observance in the West and South. On this occasion, invitations were sent by the pioneer to his friends and kindred to come and enjoy his hospitality. He had been wont to celebrate New Year's day with similar festivities. But, partly out of respect to executive authority, and partly to kindred, who had recently immigrated, he

* Gov. Thomas Ford.

had chosen this day to honor the former and to welcome the latter. Accordingly when the sun had passed the meridian, many wagons were seen converging to the farm house as a center, and not long after the whole scene was active with the arrival of guests and greeting of friends. Religious exercises, unlike the old Puritan Thanksgiving, were wanting to the day. Probably not a minister in the county had ever conducted exercises on such an occasion, for the few then were from the South, or the spontaneous growth of the West, more conspicuous for their zeal than for their learning.

"In other respects it would compare favorably with the most approved style of the festival. The barnyard had been trenched upon for fatlings of various kinds, quadruped and biped, beast and bird. He filled the table with substantial fare, while pastry from the pantry and fruits from the cellar spread a feast satisfactory, even to an epicure, and embracing variety enough to tempt the appetite of the most dainty. But all these are common to such an occasion. It was not in this respect, remarkable. In numbers, too, it was respectable. About eighty persons, one-half children and youth sat down to the feast. The pioneer at the head of the table had thanks offered, and then bid his friends welcome to his bounties. He moved among his guests delighting them by his cordiality, while he was delighted at the joy that everywhere prevailed. The children were buoyant with glee and looking on with interested delight, or were recounting past events that stood out as waymarks in life's journey, thus far completed. Joy and rejoicing gave wings to the moments. New friendships were formed and old ones were renewed. New hopes were awaked, for festive glances tell the heart's secrets as well as words of love. 'All were merry as a marrage bell.'

'The guests lingered till the waning day admonished them to depart, a few from a distance remaining. The voice of the young grew fainter and fainter. The house

was silent. I sat alone with the pioneer. Sleep fled from him as he recounted the early annals of settlement, the bright prospects and hopes, often obscured, but now happily beyond doubt. Hostile tribes of Indians had been subdued and security to family and property was now guaranteed to the settler. The climate was proved to be salubrious, and pestilential diseases, once dreaded, were no longer feared. The border man was selling out his claims and plunging deeper into the wilderness, whither the deer and the buffalo had gone. A more intelligent and more thrifty class of citizens were pouring into the state. A constitution, notwithstanding the cupidity of bad men and the efforts of demagogues to engraft slavery into it had secured freedom and good laws foreshadowed the enterprise and improvement which we are now witnessing. These reflections and many others crowded into the mind of the pioneer, and their successful issue were objects of profound thanksgiving. He had felt the weight of these evils and struggled against. them. Now a clear sky promised a glorious future.

"I have attended similar feasts in other lands. I have witnessed family meetings more affecting, but I have never witnessed a Thanksgiving occasion comprehending subjects of wider range; nor have I ever witnessed hospitality more cordially extended or more truly appreciated than at this first appointed Thanksgiving festival at the house of the pioneer."

And now we turn for another scene amid the same surroundings, but everything greatly changed. Instead of gayety, mirth and thanksgiving, there was mourning, sorrow and lamentation. The pioneer, Mr. Beard, had died and the occasion is his funeral. It was four years after the former meeting for thanksgiving and social festivity. It was also in the fall—the month of November, 1849. We will let the same authority and graphic writer, Mr. Loomis, who was an eye witness also of the latter scene, describe it for us in his inimitable gift of word painting:

"The news spread abroad that the pioneer is ill. The

MRS. NANCY C. BEARD.
WIFE OF THOMAS BEARD.

country to adorn and beautify and to enjoy rural life to which he was ardently attached.

"I descended from my eminence and joined the cavalcade of mourners. The burial spot was a retired and beautiful spot. It was a tongue of land, rising several feet above the surrounding level, nearly circular and joined by a narrow neck to the sand ridges. There, nearly surrounded by a grove of young trees, the pioneer in health had chosen this as a resting place for himself and kindred. His parents were already buried there.

"His father, a patriarch of eighty years, had come hither, leaning upon his staff, to be buried by his beloved son in these broad savannahs. And other friends were here, as many a mute monument recorded. When we arrived at the grave, a circle was formed, and with uncovered brow the Hon. Francis Arenz stepped forward, himself an exile and a pioneer from another land, to do the last act of respect to bury the dead, and in his behalf to thank the living for their courtesy. But the duty was an onerous one. After getting the spectators' attention, he referred to the character of the deceased. He had known him long. Many years ago he had come, a stranger and an exile, and found in the deceased a brother and friend. Many years of intimacy had bound them by strongest ties. The unfortunate said he never went away unrelieved by him, if in his power to do so. No enterprise worthy the philanthropist was unimportant to him while living. He was one of Nature's noblemen. Saying which the speaker burst into a paroxysm of grief and tears. The relatives of the deceased gave vent to their grief in audible sobs. Even the idle lookers-on were moved to tears. The body was consigned to its last resting place. The grave was filled, the sod was laid upon it, the crowd dispersed—the kindred to a desolate fireside, the multitude to mourn for a good man."

Following is a brief synopsis of Mr. Beard's domestic

The latter daughter is still living at the age of 75 years in the city of Brooklyn, N. Y.

I have recently corresponded with all three of these families, and sought to find a better portrait of the pioneer, but with no success. I have, however, secured a photo of his second wife and one from his son, late of Rantoul. A month before her death, Mrs. Poe in her own hand wrote the writer this self-explanatory reply to a letter of inquiry and search:

"Rev. P. C. Croll,
Beardstown, Ill.
Dear Sir:

Yours of Feb. 1st to hand, and in reply will say I very much regret that I cannot give you the desired information in regard to items of interest in my father's life, or the early settlement of Beardstown, not having been there for over forty years, I am a stranger.

"The potrait was the only picture I had, but I think if you write to Mrs. W. F. Hampel in Rantoul, Ill.—my brother's daughter—she may have pictures or mementoes of my father, which my brother left her, when he died two or three years ago. Also write to Miss M. T. Collins, Petersburg, Ill. She is very likely to be able to assist you.

"I thank you very much for the interest you have taken in writing up this article of my father and the city of his founding, and would be only too glad to assist you, if possible.

"I am the second daughter of Thomas Beard; myself and a sister in Brooklyn, N. Y., Mrs. Agnes Doane, are the only ones of the family left.

"Hoping to learn of your success in obtaining the items you desire, I am

Yours truly,
Mrs. Stella Beard Poe,
Sheridan, Wyo.

Feb. 11, 1917.

P. S. I am now 85 years old."

The letters from Mrs. Hampel and Mrs. Doane follow:

"Rantoul, Ill., Feb. 27, 1917.

Rev. Croll,
Beardstown, Ill.

Dear Sir:

"I was very much interested in your letter of recent date, but I am very sorry to say that I know of little that will be of help to you in your work. Records of my grandfather's life here seem to be only records, of memory, instead of records in "black and white." Very little of anything personal has come to my sister or me. The only thing I have of Grandfather Beard's are the gun and powder horn that he is said to have carried on his journey from New York to Beardstown as he walked at the side of his horse on which rode his bride, who had been Mrs. Nancy Dickerman.

"My Aunt, Mrs. Agnes Doane, is still living in Brooklyn, New York and I will send your letter to her in the hopes that she may be able to do more for you than I can.

"I have wished many times for a good picture of Grandfather Beard, but so far as I know, there is none. It is too bad that the oil painting you have there in Beardstown is not good for photography. If there is anything further that I can do for you, I shall be very glad to help you.

Sincerely yours,
Edith Beard Hampel."

Brooklyn, March 6, 1917.

"Rev. P. C. Croll,

Dear Sir:

"Your favor of Feb. 14th, written to my niece Mrs. Hampel of Rantoul, Ill. has been forwarded to me, that I may perhaps give you some information as to the life and character of my father, Thomas Beard, pioneer and foundef of Beardstown, Ill. My mother had a daguerreotype or him which I hope to find in the possession of some of my

EUGENE C. BEARD.

Son of Thomas Beard.

cousins and will communicate with them and let you know as soon as I hear from them.

"I have an account of a number of incidents in his life, which may prove interesting, and will write you as soon as I can find time to look them up.

"I am greatly pleased that some interest is being taken in my father for he was of the fine brave type that has been the making of our Country, a noble example for our young men.

"Thanking you for the trouble you are taking in the matter, and hoping I may find what you desire, I am

Very respectfully,
Mrs. Agnes Beard Doane.
89 Pineapple St.,
Brooklyn, N. Y."

Later Mrs. Doane sent me some family photographs, (but none of her father), and some biographical data, of which the following obituary notice was included:

Copy of obituary notice which appeared in the Beardstown Gazette of Wednesday, November 26, 1849.

Died on Wednesday evening Nov. 26th, of Typhus fever, Thomas Beard, Esq., aged 55 yrs.

It is but seldom we perform the painful task recording the death of a person so well known and universally respected as Mr. Beard. He was one of the first settlers of the country and substantially the founder of the town that bears his name. He emigrated to this place in early life and here he aided with his industry and sound practical sense, the building up of the town and the improvement of the country, the new settler never applied to him for advice and aid in vain, the former he was competent to give and the latter was as freely given when in his power. His character through an eventful life never suffered a blemish, though sustaining a position in which he would have gratified a worldly ambition, he never courted the applause of men—his was a natural nobility that the world could not

corrupt, nor the fashions of an artificial life take away. He is gone to that Court to which we are all summoned. May we who are left find at that bar as few accusers as our departed friend.—"

I have also received from Mr. Samuel Parker, of Glendale, Cal., 86 years old, an acquaintance and associate in Mr. Beard's later life, an estimate of Mr. Beard's character, in reply to a letter of inquiry from which I make following extract:

"A man about 5 ft. 10 in., in stature, rather thin, slightly stooped, he was of light complexion, had blue eyes, sandy whiskers; hair same. He was an intelligent talker, though possibly not a graduate even of a grammar school, but of frontier life; and, dealing with frontier men, made him a sharp trader for self-protection. I do not believe that it is on record in Cass County, or Beardstown, or even a tradition in any shape, that Thomas Beard ever took advantage of anybody in a business transaction. In conversation he was rather slow spoken, and deliberate, impressing his hearers as a man of good judgment and kindly, friendly, benevolent intent."

Yours truly,

Glendale, Cal.
Jan. 25, 1917.

SAMUEL PARKER.

The writer feels that Mr. Beard is worthy of some fitting memorial. Thus far only a city street and a school house in Beardstown are named for him. While the Central City Park and the city hall and the Beard Cemetery are relics and landmarks that recall his name and thoughtful generosity, the writer has advocated a more distinctive memorial in the form of a statue, or public fountain, and hopes the Centennial of Beardstown may bring it to pass.

Until this fond wish shall be realized may this sketch help to perpetuate one of Illinois' worthy pioneers and noble builders, by whom the foundations of this great State were so firmly and safely laid!